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AUTHOR Jahner, Bob
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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a retreat in which vocational rehabilitation professionals examined their own developmental experiences in community settings and related them to their professional role. Vocational rehabilitation professionals are required to act as leaders as they facilitate the process by which people who have experienced traumatic loss or disability find their way into community. "Servant leadership" is an expression of the values and responsibilities of public service in a democratic society. To succeed in leadership, one must have the capacity to discern the developmental process of community and the range of relationships that occur in it. As part of the framework for discussing the process of community, two levels of community are proposed. The nurturance community is composed of relationships such as family, friends, and support groups that develop an individual's capacity for personal authority (empowerment). The vocational community comprises relationships associated with one's public expression of inclination and work, and provides the vehicle by which internal authority derived from the nurturance community is moved into public expression. Other aspects of this model include traumatic experience or disability as estrangement from community, the role of the inspirational leader in articulating mission, and the administration of rehabilitation becoming subordinate to the authority of the community. (SV)

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# BUILDING STRONG INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THROUGH SERVANT LEADERSHIP

**Bob Jahner**
Community Rehabilitation Specialist, Vocational Rehabilitation Division
Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, Helena, Montana

This paper traces and reviews the developmental language of this age of supported employment, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the 1992 Rehabilitation Act Amendments. It is a derivation of a previously prepared retreat and was given to groups of people who are committed to leadership in the vocation of rehabilitation. The retreat was designed to assist members of vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, private non-profits and associations examine their own developmental experience in community settings and relate those experiences to our common profession of vocational rehabilitation. Servant leadership is one articulation of the unique challenges, values and responsibilities of public service in a democratic society.

**The Servant Leader**

The servant leader is distinguished by the skill of entering into relationships with individuals or communities to:

- inspire vision;
- enlist commitment to a mission; and
- serve the larger vision.

In our African language we say "a person is a person through other persons." I would not know how to be a human at all except I learned this from other human beings. We are made for a delicate network of relationships of interdependence. We are meant to complement each other. All kinds of things go horribly wrong when we break that fundamental law of our being.

**Bishop Desmond TuTu**

True integration will be achieved by true neighbors who are willingly obedient to unenforceable obligations.

**Martin Luther King**

## The Power of Language and Modeling the Model of Health

This paper seeks to address the challenges of professionals whose work is to facilitate the process by which people who have experienced traumatic loss find their way into community. These pages contain assumptions meant for our consideration as we explore our experience with growth and

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community. We are required to act as leaders by virtue of our profession. In our work our most important asset is our awareness of the wealth of developmental experience we carry in memory from our own growth in the communities that have included or excluded us.

Any discussion of community must begin with the power of language. Language is a shared symbolic system that we use to extend unarticulated personal experience into the realm of interpersonal relationship and into public expression. It is our first "power" tool. Powerful words can affect a person's health for better or worse. Some contend that words can heal or cure. Our language and how it initially described that configuration of values called vocation is critical in this difficult profession of intervention. The words of our first communities, schools, playgrounds, churches and intimate relationships are the language upon which the servant leader seeks to find common ground with people of diverse experience and background.

The common-ground language created by the leader establishes a new capacity in communities for compassionate experience. Compassionate experience occurs when individuals have had the same feelings and emotions arise from a shared experience. It is the most basic building block for the formation of relationships and for political expression. Commonality of experience serves as linkage between individuals and discrete communities. When two people have no conscious awareness of either common ground or compassionate experience, there is no basis for human relationship. Common language is the first building block of inclusive community.

## PART I: The Nature of Natural Supports: Discerning Relationship

**A Model of Health Leadership Declaration:**

> We believe in inclusiveness. Inclusiveness is the ability to include people who are strangers to us in community activities. Including people who are strangers is more valued than excluding them. Inclusiveness is a value, a vision and a commitment. It is not necessarily a spontaneous feeling.

Integral to servant leadership is the leader's skill and capacity to enter into relationships with individuals and communities. To succeed in leadership one must have the capacity to discern the developmental process of community and to discern the range of relationships that occur in it. It is a premise of this paper that the process of community is exclusive as well as inclusive. Which of those two tendencies predominates depends a great deal on the values declared by the leadership and subscribed to through the community's living model of health.

To create a framework for discussing the "process" of community we will propose a developmental model that recognizes two levels of community: the nurturance community and the vocational community.

**Nurturance Community**: This community is composed of relationships that are initially and primarily one-to-one, and very often set in youth or crisis. We live in a nurturance community all of our lives and this community is not bound by place or time. A central role of the nurturance community is the development of a capacity for intrinsic authority within the individual and the preparation of that individual for the expression of authority in vocational community. The relationships of nurturance community are part of a lifelong process and they are usually described in terms of friendship, family and, frequently in this last decade, support group. This community is the source of personal authority (empowerment). Transition, grief and gain are processed in this community. Without a nurturance community, a person is incapable of personal authority (empowerment) or participation in vocational community.

**Vocational Community**: This community consists of a network of relationships associated with one's public expression of inclination, gift and work. This level of community is productive and expressive. It links and articulates the diverse compassionate experiences of nurturance community into public consensus. A role of vocational community is to be the vehicle by which the individual moves the internal authority of the nurturance community into public expression. Vocational communities are the basis for strong, participatory democracy.

## PART II: The Nurturance Community: The Authorization of the Individual for Relationship

**A Model of Health Leadership Declaration:**

> We believe in the intrinsic authority of the individual. Empowerment is an attempt to explain the movement of authority from an extrinsic source to an intrinsic seat. The exercise of power from an intrinsic authority is more valued than the exercise of power from an extrinsic source.

If "inclusive community" is a choice and commitment rather than a fact of nature, those in leadership must decide if they will use the power of vocational community to subordinate the entire community under a predetermined model of health or to harvest the natural authority of a community to facilitate the articulation of a consensus model of health. The servant leader's skill accomplishes the latter through the inspiration of the public's intrinsic authority.

Authority, whether it resides within us or is conferred upon us from an external source, is our grounds for acting. It is our grounds for exercising power, but it is not, in itself, power. When you authorize a person to do something, you lay down a locus of control in which a person or a group of people can: 1. make decisions without conferring, 2. experience the consequences of the decision and 3. respond without fear of retribution.

In a time when it is popular to promote the dignity of risk, we need to keep in mind that the "dignity" side of dignity of risk is possible only when the risks of a situation are not viewed by the author of the action as overwhelming. Dignity is possible when a person's capacity to trust all possible outcomes is stronger than the natural anxiety

of a strange situation. This seems to be the case for both the relationships of nurturance community as well as the more abstract situations in vocational community.

The relationships of the nurturance community lay the ground for risk-taking, which in turn is the basis for all vocational expression. The nurturance relationships establish a sense of safety and trust. They are distinguished by a lack of conditionality (though never entirely unconditional). Our mistakes or failures in the conditional power communities of vocation are forgiven in nurturance community. The consequences of vocational mistakes may be painful, but we are assured by our nurturance community that they will not be fatal in a psychological or physical sense. These relationships are our laboratory for forming identity, experimenting with relating to other people and expressing identity and value. They are our safety net of performance. Dignity of risk is possible only when the nurturance community is in place for an individual. Without nurturance community, performance failure in vocational community takes on life-or-death proportions. Even in adult life, we sustain a nurturance network which is the safety net for adult transitions.

Issues of safety are as valid for the larger community as they are for the vulnerable individual. One of the challenges of leadership is to inspire trust and safety in the community being served. The leader must know how and when to nurture the inspiration of community vision, while being available to assume vocational roles of power and conditionality in the implementation of the vision. Being able to discern the different roles allows the leader to avoid betrayal of either role. The basic trust factor defines the capacity of a person's community for inclusiveness. Fear plays in the opposite direction. As individuals, our own nurturance community has contributed over time to our potential for trust, authority, relationship and, ultimately, inclusiveness.

## PART III: The Loss of Community: When Traumatic Experience Makes You a Stranger in a Familiar Land

**A Model of Health Leadership Declaration:**

> Personal loss and gain are inseparable tools in the formation of personal identity. People experience losses every day — some large and some small. A person's acknowledgement of loss and gain with community is essential to successful transitions from birth through death. The model does not encourage the acceptance of loss (disability) as much as it encourages the conscious and communal acknowledgment of loss so that a person can form the next stage of identity. Acceptance comes when an acceptable vision of the future is formed around the acknowledged loss. Acceptance is accommodated vocation.

Whenever we as individuals experience something to which no one else can relate, we become strangers. After a point, our strangeness estranges us from our familiar community. The experience of disability can be so estranging that the only possibility for the re-formation of community is with other people with disabilities who have compassionate experience. The total loss of community (alienation) for an individual is psychological death, not long to be followed by physical death.

Whether it be a fact of nature or a cultural tendency, the leader must contend with society's tendency to exclude all those people whose behavior or appearance takes on characteristics that are unfamiliar to the mainstream nurturance and vocational community. People who experience trauma are isolated for periods of time from daily life. Extended isolation can result in progressive marginalization leading to a terminal point of alienation. Leadership in this era is recognizing the critical role of vocational community in incubating the experience of inclusiveness. Inclusiveness is a mainstream outcome. Consumers who have experienced the marginalization are forming their own nurturance communities out of which they can exercise the authority of their unique experience to re-enter mainstream vocational communities. The vehicle for re-integration is the association or support group. These "triage communities" form around the experiences of catastrophe to help the survivors form compassionate communities. These communities create the nurturance level of community out of which an authority can be articulated by the members. This articulated authority becomes expressed in the vocational community as political expression. Our model of health expresses a commitment to fostering the authority and power of these associations committed to the reintegration of their members.

## PART IV: The Inspirational Leader: The Responsibility of Authority and Power and the Leadership Declaration

**The Model of Health Leadership Declaration:**

> The servant leader declares vocation openly to the public as an articulation of commitment to specific values. To the degree the authority of the declaration finds a response from the community at large, there is potential for personal, organizational and social change toward the values articulated in the declaration. The servant leader's role is to facilitate the formulation of the mission statement in the common language of the vocational and compassionate communities subscribing to the declaration.

The mission statement is explicit language declaring the responsibility of behavior to authority. A mission statement is a commitment that can be measured in terms of behavior. The slow work of this form of leadership requires the careful incorporation of the individual's experiences and authority into the larger group. This is achieved primarily by creating the opportunity for people to tell the stories of their lives in relationship to the leadership declaration. When this work occurs, the individual forms a relationship with the larger group and invests his or her authority into that group. Each person's authority enhances and alters the vision of the group. With this public relationship comes the inevitable commitment to respond to the demands of the values. In facilitating the declaration of responsibility, the leader brings into reality the mission statement. The authority of the vocational community, as a public entity, and all of the private individuals within are invested in the mission statement. The essential importance of this form of leadership is that the

commitments of responsibility are mutual. **The participants in the movement arrive at their personal sense of responsibility based on stories told publicly in their own words, and then rendered into consensus by taking into account a larger set of community concerns.**

This model presumes the expression of vocation as a primary process and the expression of need to be secondary. Without a focused sense of vocation, we can not clearly define need. The needs of a group of people who commit themselves to inclusive community will be very much different from the needs of a group committed to exclusivity. The leadership assists in creating the model from which the sense of need is derived. The leadership declaration serves the purpose of expressing commitment to the authority of a value system. It serves as a focus for anyone whose sense of vocation or vision is similar, but not necessarily as articulated. Coming into relationship with a leader, and through that relationship being able to articulate more clearly one's own vocation, it then becomes possible to define need. The independent living and supported employment movements declared inclusion, integration and consumer-centered services as the central "calling" or vocation of rehabilitation. Since hearing those declarations, vocational communities across the nation in the form of agencies, corporations, support groups, etc. have responded to the authority of those words by formulating mission statements around those central values. This leadership's articulation will assist people in their own articulation of experience. When the individual's experience is incorporated into the articulation of the larger community, we achieve consensus. When the consensus is rendered into explicit commitments to respond, we have consensus and responsibility. This is the strongest expression of the democratic model of government.

## PART V: Serving the Larger Vision: The Administration of Rehabilitation

The hospitality of listening
The coaches of language and expression
The administrators of responsive system

**The Model of Health Leadership Declaration:**

When we as individuals declare our personal authority and then express our needs relative to that authority, we are engaged in the expression of our private lives. When the public sector seeks the assistance of the community members, the hospitality rules of the community must prevail to assure the private dignity of the community members. When the individual community member wishes to participate in the public resource, within the context of private dignity assured all people under our Constitution, that person becomes responsible for expressing vocation and need.

An organization's level of commitment to servant leadership can be measured in terms of hospitality. In the "servant" dimension of the servant leader definition, the leader serves the larger vision by becoming subordinate to the authority of the community. Vocation (vision) and mission are dynamic. Leadership recognizes that the action of community means the continuous articulation of value and the subsequent

performance of responsibilities. Rehabilitation issues span the border of nurturance and vocational community. In order for consumers to drive the programs, the rules of hospitality of both communities must be taken into account when developing the service agency's strategic planning process. The first challenge of administration (ad Ministrar; to serve) is the creation of hospitality space appropriate to the community. The protocol of the vocational world is usually very explicit. The protocol of the nurturance community is usually contained in what we call "manners" or "rules of hospitality." When a leader makes a leadership declaration that affects the authority of the nurturance community, the servant leader enters into relationship with that community under the hospitality rules of that community. The leader is then stating a willingness to subordinate to the community's manners for the purpose of creating a future.

A democratic community's values are articulated and institutionalized through statute, regulation and rules. The role of supervision is accountability of behavior to law. The role of administration is distinguished from supervision in that it serves to allow members of the community to move compassionate experience to articulation, consensus and, if necessary, law and accountability. The public service system exists to facilitate the community's responsibility to continually express the authority of its own experience in law and rule.

The irony of the public system is that it can be as enlightened only as the public that hands it its instructions. If strong and inclusive community is indeed the value of our profession, the task is to declare that value in a compelling manner, and to live in a model inclusive community so that our friends and neighbors are inspired to move the consensus of inclusiveness to an ever-broader level of public mandate.

## GLOSSARY

I found myself using terminology with some license and felt it only fair to the reader that I offer a comparison of my usage with the standard we all run to: the dictionary. I have written the formal definitions in bold and then below my version of the word's meaning as it is used in this document.

Bob Jahner

**Alienation:**

**A withdrawing or separation of a person or his/her affections from an object or position of former attachment ... isolation or exile from the values of one's society.**
The separation of an individual from the community process; a terminal state of exile from nurturance and vocational community.

**Authority:**

**A conclusive statement or set of statements; a decision taken as a precedent.**
Capacity of the individual to act in a conclusive, committed fashion to a set of values. "Authorization" is permission to act responsibly out of internal authority without fear of retribution in the form of artificial consequences.

Articulate:

**To utter distinctly; to give clear and effective utterance (utter: to send forth as sound).**
To apply symbol or language to states of feeling and emotion for purpose of relationship.

Community:

**A unified body of individuals; a people of common interests living in a particular area.**
A process by which the private person:

1. develops personal, conscious identity; and
2. responsibly expresses that identity as vocation in the context of public authority.

Intervention:

**Coming between by way of hindrance, interfering by using force in another's internal affairs.**
The use of power from extrinsic authority to separate a person from his or her intrinsic authority.

Power:

**Possession of control, authority or influence over others; the ability to act or produce an effect.**
Conscious access to tools to express internal authority in vocational community. (Tool: any effective symbolic or concrete instrument available for conscious manipulation.)

Responsibility:

**Liable to be called on to answer as the primary cause, motive or agent.**
A commitment to act over time in a predictable manner in response to an articulated value system.

Story:

**To narrate an account; pictures adorning windows of medieval building.**
A vivid narration of events spoken in the primary language of the community conveyed with either implicit or explicit purpose.

Trust:

**Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something; to be confident.**
The ability to act without conscious consideration.

Value:

**A fair return or equivalent for something exchanged. To estimate or assign worth.**
That on which we consistently confer worth through behavior and expression.

Vocation:

**A summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action.**
The expression of authority in community.